

Our Special Place: The Local View



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The Local View

Purpose

To give students their first experience to observe their GLOBE Study Site, using their senses to obtain a holistic, motivating impression of the study site

Overview

Students go outside and make both large-scale and small-scale observations of a portion of their GLOBE Study Site. After a period of reflection, they transform those observations into representations - sketches, stories or poems. Students compare their area with other classmates', and consider what might explain any differences in the two areas. Students also begin to use their GLOBE Science Notebooks.

Time

One class period

Level

All

Key Concepts

- A study site is an organic whole.
- The natural world is a rich source of information. You can use your senses to gather important information.

Skills

- Increasing awareness of one's own environment
- Describing, recording and creating a representation based on observation

Materials and Tools

- A variety of art materials.
- Student notebooks to use as GLOBE Science Notebooks.

Preparation

Select a representative nearby location within your GLOBE Study Site.

Make travel arrangements, if they are needed.

If you have not already done so, create a GLOBE bulletin board area in your school or class. Eventually your students will post a wide range of information on the bulletin board. For this exercise, your students will post their drawings, poems and stories.

Prerequisites

This is best done after the Welcome to GLOBE activity.

Background

Each school in the GLOBE program conducts its observations and measurements in a designated study site. This GLOBE Study Site is a 15 km x 15 km region centered on your school and provides the broad context within which specific study sites are designated for the *Atmosphere*, *Hydrology*, *Soil*, and *Land Cover/Biology Investigations*. For more information, please refer to the section *Selecting Your Study Sites*.

In this activity, your students will explore their GLOBE Study Site with their senses before they begin making multiple measurements. If they start

with observing the whole, then they will retain a sense of this larger context within which the parts fit. Furthermore, accurate observation depends on the use of all their senses, not just their eyes. This is particularly true when observing a living eco-system.

This activity has three phases: an observation phase, a reflective phase and a representation phase. During the observational phase, students simply make observations. They record anything and everything they observe within the study site. The observations and recording are done in a stream-of-consciousness fashion to help focus



attention on the observable and heighten awareness. During the reflection phase, each student reviews his or her collection of observations and considers how the observations relate to one another. During the representation phase, students create a representation of their site or some aspect of it. This can take many forms - a poem, a detailed drawing, a story. This phase brings together each individual's observations and reflections.

This kind of initial contact with the environment strengthens the student's motivation to learn. With their lively multi-modal sensibility intact, students will observe more keenly, care more deeply, and think more broadly about the particular site. They then will be more committed to subsequent GLOBE protocols and investigations. You might want to repeat this holistic observation periodically and give the students an opportunity to see how their own perceptions grow in depth and breadth.

What To Do and How To Do It

1. Ask each student to select a place within the GLOBE Study Site. This will be their "special place." Ask students to do some of the following exercises. Read each section aloud, asking students first to observe, then to reflect, and then the write or draw in their GLOBE Science Notebooks. Pause between questions for several minutes in order to give your students the appropriate amount of time to observe, reflect and respond.

Have your students do the following:



Observation Phase

2. Sit quietly in your site, experiencing and observing it. Use your senses - your eyes, your ears, your nose - to explore the site. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? What do you feel?
3. Observe the "big picture" about your special place, looking both high enough to include the sky and low enough to see the ground. What are the biggest features you notice?
4. Observe the "small picture" in some detail, the area immediately around you. What do you notice?

Reflection Phase

5. Think back over your experience. What strikes you most strongly about your observation?
6. How much of what you saw, heard or smelled was man-made? How much is natural? What do you find beautiful? What unattractive? What questions do you have?

Representation phase

7. Sketch a picture, poem or story about your place. Include your feelings about it as well as what you have seen and learned.

When the class returns to the school, have students share their observations, sketches and writing. Post some of them on the school's GLOBE bulletin board.



Extensions

- Create individual and classroom reproductions of the site, or part of the site, in a variety of media: photographic essay, set of drawings or paintings, GLOBE Science Notebook with specimens, mural, diorama, Hypercard presentation, video, storybook, etc. Try to include something about each individual's special site.
- A second field trip could feature comparing one site with another. Students could consider what further exploration might help them learn more about their "special places."
- If you are already on GLOBEMail, have students send the latitude and longitude of the selected site to another school via GLOBEMail. Invite the other site to speculate about your site - what animals and plants live on your site? What typical

weather and climate patterns affect the site? What is the local soil and hydrology like? After the first GLOBEMail exchange, give clues about the site, if necessary.

- Research your study area's geological, historical, and legal characteristics. Look at old topographic maps. How might this site have looked five years ago? A hundred years ago? Ten thousand years ago? Describe any changes you think may have occurred during these time spans. Use both words and images to describe these changes. Survey neighbors for tales of the history of your study site.
- Explore the idea that the site may change again. What changes are most likely? Illustrate more than one scenario for what changes may take place during the current year, next year, in 10 years, and in 100 years.

Student Assessment

Have each student create a portfolio of seasonal observations for each site. Then compare and contrast the observations, looking for enhanced understanding. Ask each student to comment on what he or she has learned since the first observation, in contrast with the later observation. (This can tie in with the *Seasons Investigation*, which takes place after your students have begun collecting and submitting GLOBE data.)

Acknowledgment: This activity was inspired in part by TERC's Global Lab Project, *Selecting and Experiencing Your Study Site*.